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CORD MEYER

## Casey Picks Amateur for Most Sensitive CIA Job

In some of its choices for senior positions in its foreign-policy establishment, the ways of the Reagan administration are wondrous to behold. Just as State Department officers were beginning to recover from the appointment of a Reagan confidant without any foreign experience as deputy secretary of state, the CIA was stunned this week by the selection of a rank amateur to head its most sensitive directorate.

Reaching outside the professional cadre of trained and experienced intelligence officers, CIA Director William Casey has rejected the unanimous advice of old intelligence hands by appointing a New Hampshire businessman and Reagan political operative, Max Hugel, as deputy director for operations (DDO).

This government job was once described by columnist Stewart Alsop with only slight exaggeration as "the most difficult and dangerous after the president's." The man in this position has the responsibility for directing all the agency's secret overseas operations from recruiting spies inside Russia, to secretly penetrating the international terrorist networks, to conducting covert political activities. Allen Dulles, Richard Helms and William Colby all held this job before subsequently becoming CIA directors but they earned their promotion by many years in intelligence assignments.

The DDO's most formidable opponent and main competitor on the world stage is the head of the KGB's First Chief Directorate, who controls in Russian embassies a corps of KGB professional officers four times the size of the CIA's overseas presence.

### Incredible to KGB

The KGB chiefs in Moscow will find it incredible that the Americans should entrust the DDO responsibility to someone with virtually no previous experience, and they are undoubtedly searching their files for evidence of Mr. Hugel's role as a longtime undercover agent. They will find nothing of the sort.

It is no reflection on Hugel's business acumen in amassing a small fortune from the construction of a sewing machine company to point out that his only prior experience with intelligence was a brief stint at the end of World War II with military intelligence. As one Pentagon general commented, "The DDO office is no place for on-the-job training."

There is perhaps no position in the U.S. government where the accumulated memory of past successes

and failures and deep familiarity with the individual strengths and weaknesses of hundreds of staff officers are so essential. The DDO has to be both leader and manager, and his ability to inspire confidence among his troops depends on his record of achievement in intelligence.

### A Dicey Business

If President Reagan follows through on his intention to build up the covert political action and paramilitary resources of the CIA, this appointment is all the more surprising. As other presidents have learned, covert intervention in foreign countries can be a dicey business. The decision to intervene depends in the first instance on the DDO's judgment on whether the gains outweigh the risks.

In the only other case where a CIA director reached so far outside the ranks of the operations directorate, Allen Dulles selected a bright economist, Richard Bissell, to be DDO. Intellectually brilliant but lacking in operational experience, Bissell became the unfortunate architect of the Bay of Pigs.

In the staffs of the Senate and House intelligence committees and among friendly European intelligence services, there is concern that this appointment may further politicize the CIA. Hugel first came to Casey's attention during the presidential campaign as the result of his success in organizing ethnic groups behind Reagan's candidacy. Casey is convincing in his denial that the appointment is a political payoff, but the Democrats would find it hard to resist the temptation to replace Hugel with a political choice of their own the next time around. Step by step, the apolitical objectivity on which the agency used to pride itself is being undermined.

When confronted with these fears, Casey explains that after reviewing the qualifications of all senior operational officers he concluded that only Hugel had the required drive and ability. Casey may have been influenced by his experience in World War II when Wild Bill Donovan collected a group of talented amateurs to run U.S. intelligence.

But that was 40 years ago and the Soviets now present a more formidable challenge. Casey may yet prove to be right in choosing an able amateur for the agency's toughest job. But it's a breathtaking gamble for which the country will have to pay heavily if Casey has guessed wrong.